

# OASIS

**PLACE:**

The stacks of a suburban library

**TIME:**

Now

**CHARACTERS:**

John, 75

Margaret, 50

(The actual ages are less important than the appearance that the actors are from 2 different generations)

A daughter discovers that there's more to her father than she realized

(At rise: John is moving books from a cart into the stacks after carefully considering where they go. Clearly some have been misplaced. About 30 seconds of this before Margaret turns the corner and discovers John. He continues this occasionally throughout the play)

Margaret

So there you are. What are you doing here?

John

Right now I'm coming to grips with the irony of a library hiring young people who can't read. For goodness sakes, it's just letters and numbers.

Margaret

I mean what is all this? Do you work here? Why? How?

John

Nice to see you, too Margaret. How are the kids?

Margaret

The kids are fine, dad, but I am concerned about you.

John

I'm fine as well. But you didn't have to drive all the way in from Long Island, you could have called.

Margaret

I've been calling and you don't pick up the phone nor do you return messages.

John

How did you know I was here?

Margaret

Apparently your new neighbors, the young couple that bought Eddie and Eileen's house? The wife happened to be off today and saw me looking around the house like I was casing it. When I told her who I was she said she had given you a few books to return as you come to the library so often.

John

They're nice. Don't see them much. They're always working like most everyone on that street nowadays; and I do return messages when I get them but I haven't gotten any messages.

Margaret

(Getting louder) That's not possible I've left five. (from off stage "Shush")

John

Yes, the thing is, the answering machine is broken.

Margaret

Has it occurred to you to have it fixed?

John

Yes, Margaret, I've been busy. I'm not an imbecile.

Margaret

I don't mean that Dad, but what if something happens and I need to get in touch with you.

John

Well dear, let's face it, if something happens it'll more likely be me or someone else trying to reach you...

Margaret

...Dad

John

...but I take your point.

Margaret

Good. (slight pause) What do you mean you've been busy? Working here? Do you need money?

John

No I'm fine with money. I volunteer here twice a week.

Margaret

OK but where else are you going? You're never home.

John

Well actually I'm here on alot of the days I don't volunteer.

Margaret

Doing what?

John

There's a lot going on here.

Margaret

If you want to socialize I don't know why you don't go to the senior center. You can walk there from the house instead of driving across town to get here.

John

Look, the senior center is fine if you have a hankering for bland food and pinochle with people who can't hear. I'll be sure to start going there when I develop an ulcer. The place is populated by people who have, for the most part, given up. They've said, basically, "I'm retired. I don't need to know anything else about the world, or how to do anything I don't already know how to do". If I wanted that I would have moved to Florida.

Margaret

C'mon it can't be that bad. They must have some activities there.

John

(with more than a twinge of sarcasm) Oh sure, lots of great stuff. Let's see. Once a week they have a guy who plays piano. So you get to sit there and listen to music that was out of date in my parent's time. Then of course there's bingo; and the weekly dance party. You remember how I love the chicken dance. Then they bring in a regular parade of people who talk about all the things that have happened or will happen to you as you get older. They've got a speaker for every disease and difficulty. Frankly it's depressing.

Margaret

So what's going on here?

John

Plenty. The library started a chorus. We rehearse every week...

Margaret

Since when do you sing?

John

I've always wanted to sing. I just never had the opportunity or took the time to find it.

Margaret

That's great. I can't pretend that I'm not surprised.

John

Oh, and there's a drawing class that meets here once a week. Until someone else can identify what I've drawn I've decided that I'm an abstract artist.

Margaret

All of a sudden my father is a renaissance man. OK I can see that what's going on here is at least stimulating.

John

It's not just that. The people here are different. They read. Books. They're interested in learning, and talking about something besides how their kids are all either geniuses or ingrates. Not that people here never talk about their kids. Don't worry I'm very complimentary about you and your brother.

Margaret

I don't know how deserving we are of compliments. Neither of us knew you had these interests.

John

Honey, I didn't know I had these interests. When you're Mother died I was going through the motions. I was kind of lost. The next two years most of our friends moved away. I didn't know what to do. The suburbs can feel pretty desolate sometimes.

Margaret

Dad, Robbie and I both asked you to come live with us. (from off stage "Shush")

John

I know sweetheart but that's not the answer. I just had to find my own way out of this. Margaret, I'm not a martyr. Really. I appreciate that you and brother want to help and there might be a day when I'll need it; and if there is I promise I won't be shy about asking. But for now, I'm fine

Margaret

OK so you're taking some classes, you're helping out here. Great. How come I can't reach you in the evening?

John

There's a whole group of folks in the same situation as me. We go to each other's homes. We go out to the movies, dinner...

Margaret

That's great

John

...and...there's a woman in the chorus who... well we're spending quite a bit of time together.

Margaret

Whoa...wha... since when... when were you going to tell me about this?

John

When there's something to tell you. I'm sure you didn't come running to me every time you had a date with a new fella.

Margaret

You mean there's going to be more women? (from off stage "Shush")  
(responding to off stage voice) Could you be any more of a cliché?

John

Take it easy Maggie, Ann and I are just friends enjoying each other's company.

Margaret

(Shocked but trying not to show it) That's great Dad. You should be going out and meeting new people.

John

I'm glad you feel that way, cause I was thinking of inviting her to come with me when I come to your place for dinner next week.



Margaret

Dad, I was saying you should meet new people, not me.

John

Margaret...

Margaret

I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Of course you should bring...uh

John

...Ann

Margaret

Of course you should bring Ann with you. (pause) So...Ann... does she work? She's a widow?...

John

Honey, take it easy. If something develops you'll have plenty of time to compile a dossier.

Margaret

I'm just...never mind. (pause) So you enjoy this, what you're doing here?

John

Yes. It was really helpful when my life was so... I don't know...disordered. It felt good to come here and feel like I could impose a little structure where it seems to be needed. Now I just like it and I feel like I can give something back to place that's given me a lot.

Margaret

Well, I'm really glad you found this place. The library. Who knew? (thinking) Maybe I should see what's going on in our library. I haven't been there since Jake was a kid.

John

Never know what you'll find.

Margaret

I gotta go (Kisses him) Have fun-but give me a heads up if you decide to elope.

(she leaves and we hear from off stage):

and fix your answering machine. Yeah and I know "Shush".

END